

Abraham Prepares to Sacrifice Isaac

Scripture Reference: [Genesis 22:1-18](#); [Hebrews 11:17-19](#)



Suggested Emphasis or Theme: We should be willing to give up (sacrifice) anything if it will help us to serve God better.

Memory Verse: Your faith makes you sacrifice your lives to serve God. [Philippians 2:17a, ICB](#)



Story Overview:

Abraham's faith was tested when the Lord asked him to sacrifice Isaac on an altar. Abraham had a strong faith in God's earlier promise that he would have many descendants, so he set out to prepare an altar and kill his only son. When Abraham displayed this willingness to obey God unconditionally at the last moment, an angel stopped the sacrifice.

Background Study:

If you set out to teach the Bible to children, you will probably find this story difficult to tell. That a father would kill his own son is beyond belief. This, in fact, is what faith is. It is beyond belief. Faith looks beyond the present situation and looks toward something that is not seen. ([Hebrews 11:1](#))

As difficult as it is to comprehend the events in today's lesson, they are only a foreshadowing of another time, later in history, when another father allowed his son to be sacrificed on a cross.

The intense emotional drama of this Biblical event displays exactly how far Abraham had come in his absolute trust in God. He trusted God so much he knew that if he killed his son, God would raise him from the dead.

“By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.” Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.” [Hebrews 11:17-19, NIV](#)

Believing through faith that God would raise his son from the dead was one thing, but Abraham takes this to the ultimate level by actually lifting up that knife to plunge it into his son's body. No wonder James will later use this event as an example of how faith and action go hand-in-hand and how action makes faith complete. ([James 2:20-24](#))

God led Abraham from [Beersheba](#) to the “region of Moriah” and to the “Mount of the Lord” ([Genesis 22:14](#)) to perform this sacrifice. This is where the city of Jerusalem would later emerge. King Solomon also built the temple here ([2 Chronicles 3:1](#)).

Today both Jews and Muslims mark the traditional specific location as the [Foundation Stone](#) in what is now the [Dome of the Rock](#) in Jerusalem. Jewish tradition is that this was where Abraham sacrificed Isaac and where the “Holy of Holies” portion of the temple originally stood.

This was to be a burnt offering, as later described in [Leviticus Chapter 1](#). When an animal was offered by burning it on an altar, the sacrifice “represented complete dedication and surrender to God.” The animal was killed and then burnt until nothing was left. (As described in “*The Tabernacle*”, Rose's book of Bible charts, maps, and timelines. (2015). Torrance, CA: Rose Publishing.)

Once it was clear to Abraham that he would not be sacrificing Isaac on the altar, the Lord provided a ram for him to substitute and show his complete dedication and surrender to God.

In today's lesson, talk about how our faith is demonstrated in our willingness to surrender everything to God. For a child, this is best understood in terms of what things are important to us in life and comparing those to the importance of obeying God.



Way to Introduce the Story:

Ask for volunteers to be blindfolded. Tell them to open their mouth because you are going to give them something to eat. “Do you trust me? What if I am giving you a yucky worm or a rotten apple to eat?” Continue in this train of thought for a little while and then put something VERY tasty in their mouth (lolly-pop, biscuit, etc.) Discuss what it felt like to trust someone when you did not know what they were going to do. “Abraham trusted God even when he did not understand what God was going to do.”

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The Story:

Many years ago, God decided to build a great nation so that this nation could follow him and bless the world. God chose Abraham as the man that would begin this nation.

Have you ever tried to count how many stars there are in the sky at night? There are too many to count! Well, God told Abraham that counting his descendants would be like trying to count stars. He would have so many grandchildren, great-grandchildren, great-great-grandchildren, and great-great-great-grandchildren that no one could even count them.

Abraham believed in God, but as the years went by, he and his wife, Sarah, wondered how God would make this happen. They were getting older and older and still had no children together.

But, of course, God kept his promise!

Finally, when Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90 years old, they had a baby. They named their son Isaac.

Abraham and Sarah loved Isaac very much and looked forward to the day when Isaac would marry and have children. Then those children would grow up and have children, and then those children would grow up and have children.

Abraham loved his son and loved God. Even though Abraham loved God and believed what God said, a day came when Abraham was tested. The testing day was the day God asked Abraham to do a very difficult thing.

During the time of Abraham, people showed their devotion to God by placing food or sometimes an animal they had killed on an altar and burning it up. This was called a "sacrifice".

Even though Abraham knew about this kind of sacrifice, he had never heard about the kind of sacrifice that God asked of him on this testing day.

God said, "Take your only son, Isaac, the son you love. Go to the land of Moriah. There kill him and offer him as a whole burnt offering. Do this on one of the mountains there. I will tell you which one."

Most people would have just said, "NO WAY, GOD!" After all, Abraham loved Isaac. Besides, Isaac was his only son. God had promised him that Isaac would grow up and have children, and his children would grow up and have children so that one day God's people would be so many that no one could count them. If Isaac died, this could never happen.

And that is when Abraham realised something very important. God would always do the right thing. If he obeyed God, even in this very hard thing, God would make it all right in the end. He thought that maybe God would let Isaac die, but then he would bring him back to life.

Abraham did not understand exactly what would happen, but he had faith in God. He would do what God said.

When Abraham and his son got to the top of the mountain, they stacked stones on top of stones to build an altar. Isaac asked his father what animal they would put on the altar. Only Abraham knew that Isaac would be the one on the altar instead of an animal.

And then, the time came for Abraham to do what God said and kill his son. But do you think Abraham actually killed his son? No, he did not. At the last minute, an angel called out in a loud voice and told Abraham to stop. Even though God knew that Abraham had enough faith to obey him, God did not want him actually to kill Isaac.

What a relief! God would never want a person to be killed and burned on an altar. Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught in some bushes. He and Isaac offered the ram as a sacrifice on the altar.

That day, Abraham learned he loved God more than anything else. He would always have faith in God.

And Isaac continued to grow up and follow God. And guess what? He had children, and then they had children, and then they had children...

As years passed, the number of Abraham's descendants became so many that they were as difficult to count as the number of stars in the sky.

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection, student interaction and/or emotion.

[Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

[Click here to download the slideshow](#), or click here to [download the pictures to print](#).

Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

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Review Questions:

1. What did God tell Abraham to do with his son, Isaac? Take him to Mount Moriah, kill him, and offer him as a burnt offering sacrifice.
2. What happened when Abraham was just about to kill Isaac? An angel stopped him.
3. God did not really want Abraham to kill his son. Why did he ask Abraham to do it? It was a test of his faith.

Song Suggestions:

- [He's Got the Whole World in His Hands Song](#)
- [My God is So Big Song](#)
- [Father Abraham Song](#)
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more options.

Learning Activities and Crafts:

[\(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation\)](#)

Activities:

- Discuss things that we might have to sacrifice (give up) to serve God better. Examples: Our favourite TV program if it comes on during worship time, toys or clothes to someone whose house burned, popularity, bad habits, etc.



- Learning activity: "Am I Willing to Sacrifice?" Try this group activity where the children contemplate what is important to them and then consider if they would be willing to sacrifice it for God. [Full instructions here.](#)
- Older children can discuss [Matthew 5:29-30](#)
- Discuss things that people might love more than God. TV, sports, being famous, etc.
- The more abstract ideas in the lesson today can be made clearer to younger children by emphasizing the fact that God is more important than anything or anyone in our lives. Hold up or show pictures of items and ask which is more important, this thing or God. Again, don't rush this. Even very young children can weigh up whether a toy or God is more important. Let them think about it.
- Invite a guest to speak to the class today. A Christian who has had to give up something to follow Christ.
- Recite the memory verse ([Proverbs 3:5](#)) together. Play the "[Pick a Card Memory Verse Game](#)".

Crafts:



- To help with the discussion: Ask children to draw four squares on a piece of paper (or fold the paper into squares). In one square, they should write the word "GOD". In each of the other four squares, they can draw pictures of people or things that are very important to them. Create "1st Place" ribbons from paper or actual ribbon. Children then talk about the people and things that are important to them and then glue the first place ribbon on the square containing the word "God".



- Have children draw a picture of an altar. They should then write the important things in their life on the top of the altar to show that they give all of these things to God and that He is the most important part of their lives.
- Print bookmarks, trading cards or timelines ([printable pages](#)).

Visit the [Teaching Ideas](#) page for additional activities and crafts.

Other Online Resources:

- [Colouring page Abraham & Isaac \(Christian Answers\)](#)
- [Craft: How to make an alter craft \(Bible Class Creations\)](#)
- [Other: Activities, visual aids to print, and crafts ideas \(Bible Fun for Kids\)](#)

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